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WRITTEN PROPONENT testimony for SB 437, Establishing the Kansas education enrichment program to provide educational awards to elementary and secondary school students for qualifying expenses for educational goods and services.

TO: Madam Chair Senator Baumgardner and Education Committee members

FROM: Lucrecia Nold, Public Policy Specialist, Kansas Catholic Conference

DATE: February 14, 2024

Madam Chair Baumgardner and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Lucrecia Nold and I serve as the Public Policy Specialist for the Kansas Catholic Conference, which is the public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Kansas. I wish to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to provide PROPONENT testimony for SB 437.

We wish to recognize the success the Kansas Education Enrichment Program (KEEP) has had to date. In a recent news article by [KWCH](#), all available funds have now been awarded, which covers about 50,000 Kansas kids in all 105 counties. What a tremendous outreach and opportunity these kids and families were able to receive! Governor Kelly has recognized the success of KEEP by stating: **“By investing in our students now, we are preparing for our economic future and delivering on our mission to be the best state to live, work, and raise a family.”**

The Kansas Catholic Conference could not agree more.

A core tenet of Catholic Church Teaching recognizes that parents are the first and primary educators of their children. This means parents directing the education of their children, sometimes assisted by other individuals and entities, like teachers and schools.

Pope Francis also recognizes the importance of education when he stated, “Education cannot be neutral. It is either positive or negative; either it enriches or it impoverishes; either it enables a person to grow or it lessens, even corrupts him. The mission of schools is to develop a sense of truth, of what is good and beautiful. And this occurs through a rich path made up of many ingredients. This is why there are so many subjects — because development is the results of different elements that act together and stimulate intelligence, knowledge, the emotions, the body, and so on.”

KEEP has been a rich and helpful aide to parents as they seek the best for their children. KEEP has opened the door for providing access to many resources designed to help children reach their fullest potential. These resources include tutoring classes, musical lessons, education camps and much more, resulting in beneficial learning opportunities to the children of Kansas.

The Kansas Catholic Conference fully support SB 437. We recognize its current success, along with the enriching opportunity it provides for parents and their children. Through KEEP, we can help gift our Kansas children with the best ingredients they need to grow into thriving Kansas adults.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony and thank you for your consideration. My contact information is below if you have any questions.



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